

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant : ABELS et al.
Serial No : 10/632,017
Confirm. No : 9343
Filed : July 31, 2003
For : BALL-AND-SOCKET JOINT
Art Unit : 3679
Examiner : Ernesto Garcia
Dated : January 11, 2007

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

REPLY BRIEF

In response to the Examiner's Answer of November 16, 2006 Applicant hereby replies.

102(b) rejection - Yao

The Examiner's Answer states that the sliding ring A1 as identified by the Examiner, which is embedded in the sealing bellows, rotates along with the sealing bellows. However, Yao fails to disclose a sliding ring that is mounted to slide in a ball race that is fixed to the ball pivot. In the present invention, the sliding ring receives the pivot-side edge of the sealing bellows (Claim 1, line 8: "a sliding ring receiving said pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows"). The sliding ring of the present invention slides within the ball race. This is a different approach than that of Yao. In Yao, the embedded element (A1) fails to slide in the ring collar 13 since the embedded element (A1) is surrounded by the sealing bellows 8. Even

if the embedded element (A1) could slide within the ring collar 13, the sealing bellows 8 would wear immediately and would constantly have to be lubricated due to the significantly high friction of the rubber contact surface. In contrast to Yao, the sliding ring of Appellant's invention is mounted so that the sliding ring slides within the ball race, which does not require lubrication and advantageously reduces friction. Further, Yao fails to disclose a sliding ring having a sliding surface facing a joint ball arranged adjacent to the ball race (Claim 1, lines 9-10: "said sliding ring having a sliding surface facing the joint ball arranged adjacent to the ball race"). Applicant fails to see how the embedded surface (as indicated by the Examiner as A9) of the embedded element (A1) has a sliding surface. The embedded surface (A9) of the embedded element fails to slide within the dust cover 8.

As to the other points raised in the Examiner's Answer these are already addressed in Appellant's Appeal Brief of August 31, 2006.

For all the above reasons and those stated in Appellant's Appeal Brief, the Board is respectfully requested to overturn the rejections in the last Office Action.

Further action on the merits is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted
for Applicant,



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SHOULD ANY OTHER FEE BE REQUIRED, THE PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
IS HEREBY REQUESTED TO CHARGE SUCH FEE TO OUR DEPOSIT ACCOUNT 13-
0410.